MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Testimony by Pamela Frost, Professor of Mathematics
Middlesex Community College
Before the Higher Education Committee
February 14, 2013

Good afternoon Madam Co-Chairs and members of the Committee. My name is Pam Frost. I am a resident of Middletown. I am also a Professor of Mathematics and Mathematics Division Chair at Middlesex Community College. I am here today to speak in support of House Bill 5618: *An Act Authorizing Bonds for Capital Projects at Middlesex Community College.*

I have been teaching mathematics at the high school, community college, and university level for over 35 years. I've been employed by community colleges in CT since 1989 and at Middlesex for 20 years now. I love what I do and wholeheartedly support the mission of our institution: "In all it does, Middlesex Community College strives to be the college of its community. By providing high quality, affordable, and accessible education to a diverse population, the college enhances the strengths of individuals through degree, certificate, and lifelong learning programs that lead to university transfer, employment, and an enriched awareness of our shared responsibilities as global citizens."

I am here today to tell you that we are extremely challenged to fulfill this mission and serve our community in the way it deserves because of lack of appropriate space and resources. When I started teaching math in the 1970's, about the same time when the majority of our buildings were constructed, most math classes were conducted using the "chalk and talk" teaching method. The classroom environment was entirely teacher directed.

But the math classroom of today is different; it needs to be student centered. At Middlesex we strive to find the right combination of instructional approaches and materials that best meet the needs of the students we serve. We offer self-paced options, ways to accelerate the math sequence, online courses, as well as traditional classes that attempt to make the best use of collaborative learning, individualized learning, online resources, technology, and various other pedagogical approaches including flipped classrooms. The problem is we don't have the spaces conducive to this type of instruction. Our students sit in individual desks with a very small surface for their book, calculator, mobile device, and/or paper with their backpacks and coats filling all the space in between. It is next to impossible for the instructor to move

around the room and interact with individuals or groups of students. Further, forming groups and moving everything so students can collaborate is a whole other challenge. We need "modern" classrooms that allow for much more flexible teaching approaches to increase student success. Further, we need appropriate spaces to support math instruction. Currently our College Learning Center, which supports all disciplines, has inadequate space and staff to meet the demands of our students. This will only become worse as we implement Public Act 12-40 and are required to offer embedded support with no additional resources.

Recently Governor Malloy announced a $1.5 billion proposal to position the University of Connecticut as a leading research institution, bringing jobs to the state, especially those in STEM fields, and investing in the state's workforce of tomorrow. The data shows that a majority of our state's future workforce, today's young residents of Connecticut, attends or will attend a Connecticut community college and/or state college or university. The total enrollment at the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities is approximately three times that of UConn. Our students live in Connecticut, go to school in Connecticut, and stay in Connecticut. We need to invest in them as well.

Mathematics serves as a portal to many disciplines, especially those in the sciences, technology, and engineering thus making success in teaching math, particularly to the many underprepared students that enter our community colleges today, all the more critical. At Middlesex we desperately need the facilities to help our students become competent in mathematics so that they have the opportunity to pursue their career goals and aspirations and be productive citizens of this state.

Thank you for this opportunity to address your committee in support of House Bill 5618.